

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4102

S E C R E T BEIRUT 5438

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LE

SUBJECT: ATMOSPHERICS AMONG LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AFTER RECENT
CRISIS

1. YESTERDAY I HAD LUNCHEON WITH VICTOR MOUSSA, A NOT
TOO SCRUPULOUS BUT EXTREMELY WEALTHY CHRISTIAN LAWYER
WHO DABBLES EXTENSIVELY IN LOCAL POLITICS. ALSO PRESENT
WAS GEORGE ABOU ADEL, LOCAL RICISSIMO, WHO HAS RUN FOR
PARLIAMENT UNSUCCESSFULLY AND WHO IS PERSONALLY CLOSE TO
FRANGIE. BOTH THESE MEN TOOK ME ASIDE TO EXPRESS THEIR
CONCERN RE CURRENT MILITARY IMBALANCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS
AND FEDAYEEN. THEY ATTRIBUTED RELATIVE SUCCESS OF
KATAEB DURING RECENT FIGHTING TO COURAGE OF INDIVIDUAL
KATAEB, NOTWITHSTANDING FACT THAT THESE MEN WERE OUT-
GUNNED BY FEDAYEEN. THEY ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT
KATAEB HAD RECEIVED MODEST SUPPORT FROM LEBANESE
ARMY AND MORTARS AND RECOILESS RIFLES. THEY STATE,
HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT KATAEB SHORT-
COMINGS BE RECTIFIED AND BOTH INDICATED THAT KATAEB
MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO PURCHASE MORTARS AND "EVEN
CANNONS" THAT THEY COULD STASH AWAY IN THE HILLS FOR
USE IN FUTURE ENCOUNTERS. CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON
OF ALL SORTS ARE CURRENTLY BEING APPROACHED FOR
NECESSARY FUNDS, WHICH APPARENTLY ARE FORTHCOMING.
THEY IMPLIED, HOWEVER, THAT HELP SHOULD COME FROM

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"OTHER FRIENDS".

2. I TOOK RATHER SHARP EXCEPTION TO LATTER, STATING IT DID NOT SEEM REALISTIC TO EXPECT ANYTHING FROM LEBANON'S TRADITIONAL FRIENDS, SUCH AS FRANCE AND THE U.S. GIVEN THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, I OPINED THAT THE GREATEST ERROR KATAEB COULD CURRENTLY MAKE WOULD BE TO COUNT ON EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS I TOLD BOTH OF THEM THAT THE KATAEB SHOULD BEND EVERY EFFORT BY NEGOTIATION TO MEND THE LEBANESE WOUNDS AND THAT THEY MUST REALIZE THAT RECENT KATAEB LOCAL SUCCESSES HAD CAUSED ANXIETY AND CONCERN AMONG THEIR MOSLEM COMPATRIOTS.

3. FOREGOING IS, I BELIEVE, SYMPTOMATIC OF THINKING AMONG EVEN RELATIVELY MODERATE CHRISTIANS IN THE LEBANON TODAY. I TRUST THE LINE THAT I TOOK MEETS WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL IN THAT FURTHER ARMED CONFRONTATION HERE WOULD HELP NOBODY. OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE ENCOUNTERED ROUGHLY SIMILAR VIEWS AND ARE, OF COURSE, TAKING THE SAME POSITION AS I HAVE EXPRESSED ABOVE.

GODLEY

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